

The Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act

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Prevention efforts are essential to eradicating the scourge of human trafficking. The international community, scholars, NGOs, human trafficking experts, and other governments have all recognized that one of the most critical components of preventing human trafficking from occurring is reducing the demand for trafficked persons. This bill would amend the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to reflect the need to prevent sex trafficking by reducing the demand for commercial sex.

The Problem

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated sex trafficking in the United States and in nations throughout the world. In the State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, the TIP Acting Director warned that the pandemic has created "an ideal environment for human trafficking to flourish and evolve." It has been the longstanding position of the United States to reduce the demand for sex trafficking victims, and there is broad international consensus on the necessity of demand reduction efforts to prevent human trafficking.

Research has shown that sex trafficking is less prevalent in countries where prostitution is illegal and more prevalent in countries where prostitution is legalized. Unfortunately, current TIP Reports do not properly evaluate the measures necessary to prevent human trafficking. This bill provides a simple solution by making the prohibition of the purchasing of commercial sex (which the U.S. has done itself) a requirement for meeting the TIP criteria of "minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking."

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The annually published TIP Report, mandated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), has been highly effective in pressuring foreign countries to bolster their anti-trafficking measures and coordinating the international response to the modern slave trade.

The *Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act* amends the TVPA to ensure that TIP Reports consider whether the government of a country has made serious and sustained efforts to:

- Prohibit the purchase of commercial sex acts or implement a policy against the purchase of commercial sex acts
- Educate buyers of commercial sex on how traffickers exploit prostituted persons for human trafficking
- Reduce demand for participation in international sex tourism by nationals of the country
- Ensure that anti-trafficking-in-persons training and provisions are incorporated into codes of conduct for the staff of the government.